

WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR TREASURY AND RESOURCES
BY SENATOR S.Y. MÉZEC
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 10th MAY 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 17th MAY 2021

Question

Will the Minister advise how many of the homes being planned for construction by the States of Jersey Development Company (SoJDC) on the South Hill site will be for sale or rent through the Affordable Housing Gateway, and how many will be sold on the open market; and what efforts is she, as shareholder representative, taking to ensure that these homes will not be sold to investors?

Answer

The Minister notes that the Senator asked a very similar question during Questions Without Notice at the sitting of the 11th of May 2021.

The proposed redevelopment of the former Government offices at South Hill is still in the initial design stages and SoJDC is currently carrying out a public consultation and pre-application processes. The current proposals are for approximately 150 residential units.

SoJDC will be structuring the site as Flying Freehold (as opposed to Share Transfer). This will ensure that the residential units can only be purchased by Entitled or Licensed individuals in perpetuity.

In accordance with P.73/2010, SoJDC must follow the development guidance set by the Minister for the Environment. The Minister for the Environment prepared and published a Development Brief for South Hill as the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance. This Development Brief was itself the subject of public consultation. A key extract from the Brief is as follows:-

“The redevelopment of the site for residential use would provide an outstanding opportunity to create a very special living environment and would introduce a use with vitality and vibrancy which would help to enliven this area and contribute to the residential regeneration of St Helier. The potential use of the site for residential development is supported by the South West St Helier Planning Framework, which identifies the location as a key opportunity site. In considering the development of South Hill the Revised 2011 Island Plan sets out the need for housing, especially affordable homes. The use of States-owned land to help meet the need for affordable homes is a clear policy objective of the current Island Plan. The Plan explicitly states that where public land is to be released during the plan period its potential to help contribute to the provision of affordable homes should be a primary consideration. The Plan does, however, qualify this by stating that the extent to which all or some States-owned sites contribute to meeting this need will be determined through agreement between respective Ministers and have regard to the public benefit to be derived from other forms of development on these sites. The Minister for the Environment, therefore, considers that this is a premium, high value site where – if it is to be redeveloped for a residential use - the potential to secure maximum return in the release of this public asset should be secured. There are other public sites planned to be released for redevelopment which will better contribute to the provision of affordable homes.”

Accordingly, no homes being planned for construction by SoJDC on the South Hill site will be for sale or rent through the Affordable Housing Gateway.

The Senator is aware that the States established Andium Homes as its key delivery vehicle of affordable homes for rent and sale, and that Andium have recently announced the delivery of over 400 properties on other sites in St Helier.

The Minister believes that looking at Island sites and Islanders' housing needs on a holistic basis rather than considering a site in isolation is the preferred approach and more forward-thinking.

The Minister's understanding is that foreign buy-to-let investors will be precluded from acquiring units on the South Hill development.